

# Planning Meals: The Fat Challenge



Advice about fat can be very confusing since some types of fat are healthy and some are not. While it is important to limit how much fat you eat, it should not be eliminated altogether. Fat is vital because it provides energy, is a source of vitamins A, D, E and K and is an important part of all body cells. Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide recommends including a small amount (about 30-45 mL or 2-3 tablespoons) of unsaturated fats each day. Examples of unsaturated fats are: oils (canola, corn, olive, soy, etc.), oil-based salad dressings, non-hydrogenated margarine and mayonnaise. Butter, ghee, hard margarine, lard and shortening should be limited since they are higher in less-healthy saturated and/or trans fats.

Choose healthy fats by following *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide*:

## Vegetables and Fruit

- Eat more vegetables and fruits, which are virtually fat-free.
- Use a dash of lemon or herbs on vegetables instead of butter or margarine.
- Use "lower fat" varieties of salad and mayonnaise dressings. If using full-fat dressing, choose oil-based dressings (like vinaigrettes) instead of those made from cheese or cream (like blue cheese, ranch, etc).
- Make your own salad dressing by mixing a tablespoon of vinegar with a teaspoon of olive oil.

## Grain Products

- Grain products such as bread, rice and pasta are naturally low in fat. Their fat content only increases when you add fat, like butter, oil or cream sauce. Add fat sparingly to grain products. If you do add some fat, choose unsaturated fat (like oil or non-hydrogenated

margarine) instead of saturated fat (like butter) and use only a small amount.

- Limit higher fat foods such as doughnuts, commercial muffins and croissants.
- Read labels and choose lower fat varieties of crackers and cookies, such as saltines, Melba toast and gingersnaps.
- When baking, reduce the amount of fat in a recipe by adding applesauce or low fat sour cream for half the fat. Or, for full-fat recipes, use oil or non-hydrogenated margarine in your baked goods instead of lard, shortening or butter.

## Milk and Alternatives

- Choose lower fat milk such as skim, 1% or 2%.
- Look for lower fat varieties of cheese, cream cheese and sour cream. Choose sherbet, frozen yogurt or ice milk instead of ice cream.
- Use milk or evaporated milk in coffee and tea instead of cream.

**Trusted advice from dietitians. [www.dietitians.ca](http://www.dietitians.ca)**

## Meat and Alternatives

- Eat at least two 75 g (2½ oz) servings of fish each week. Choose fatty fish, such as salmon, rainbow trout, mackerel and tuna, most often. Fatty fish provide helpful omega-3 polyunsaturated fats.
- Have a meatless meal at least once a week.
- Enjoy baked beans, an omelette or a vegetable stir-fry with chickpeas.
- Replace half of the meat in casseroles with cooked dried beans, peas and lentils or barley and some extra vegetables.
- Eat smaller portions of meat. Have 75 g (2½ oz) servings of cooked meat (the size of a deck of cards).
- Choose lean cuts of meat: sirloin, beef round and rump; pork leg roasts, tenderloin and ham; white skinless poultry. Trim off all visible fat before cooking.
- For luncheon meats, choose roast beef, roast chicken or turkey breast most often. Processed meats, such as ham, pastrami, hot dogs, salami, sausages and bacon (or any other meats that are smoked or salted) are high in salt and fat and should be eaten less often.
- Nuts are high in fat, but most of the fat is unsaturated (the good kind). Limit your serving size to 60 mL (¼ cup).
- Cook with oil instead of butter or ghee.
- Bake, broil, grill, poach, roast or braise meats instead of frying. Baste with wine, lemon juice or broth.

## Other foods

- Limit high fat snack foods such as potato chips, nachos and chocolates. Choose unbuttered popcorn instead.
- Choose olive or canola oils for cooking or salad dressings.

## Other tips

- All foods can be part of a healthy diet. Balance higher fat foods with lower fat choices. If you have a hamburger and fries for lunch, for example, choose a vegetable and chickpea stir-fry with rice for supper.
- Use a non-stick frying pan, adding a teaspoon of oil if necessary.
- Buy a cookbook with low fat recipes, or borrow one from the library or a friend.
- Use herbs and spices rather than rich sauces to add flavour to food.

**For more nutrition information contact your local health unit, health centre or hospital. Or visit [www.dietitians.ca](http://www.dietitians.ca)**